

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 370 882

SO 024 087

AUTHOR Titus, Charles
TITLE Civic Education for Global Understanding. ERIC Digest.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education, Bloomington, IN.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO EDO-SO-94-2
PUB DATE Apr 94
CONTRACT RR93002014
NOTE 4p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses - ERIC Clearinghouse Products (071) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Citizen Participation; Citizen Role; *Citizenship Education; Citizenship Responsibility; *Civics; Elementary Secondary Education; *Global Approach; International Relations; Social Studies; *World Affairs

IDENTIFIERS ERIC Digests; *Global Education

ABSTRACT

An approach to citizenship preparation that might be called civic education for global understanding includes a renewed engagement with and dedication to the civic needs of the nation. A need exists for students not only to continue to study the basic concepts and values of democracy but also to gain a broader understanding of the complex and interrelated world. The components of civic education for global understanding involve (1) educating youngsters about their nation's history and government with emphasis upon the core concepts of democracy in the United States and (2) sharpening student awareness that the responsibilities of citizenship extend far beyond national boundaries. The goals of civic education for global understanding are to revive civic interest and increase participation in community and national affairs by citizens and to enhance recognition by U.S. citizens that their obligations of citizenship extend beyond the nation's frontiers. Implementation requires changes in how civic education is taught and in the approach to the social studies subject matter. Contains 9 references. (CK)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED 370 882

Civic Education for Global Understanding

by
Charles Titus

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

* Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official
OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

50 024 087

ERIC Digest EDO-SO-94-2

April 1994

Civic Education for Global Understanding

by Charles Titus

Preparation of young people for effective citizenship has been a major concern of American educators. Today, however, when the world has been made immeasurably smaller through revolutionary developments in communications and transportation, and as the planet is threatened by a constellation of transnational problems of staggering complexity, a different approach to citizenship preparation seems needed. This approach—which might be called civic education for global understanding—includes a renewed engagement with and dedication to the civic needs of our nation. It continues to involve “explicit and continuing study of the basic concepts and values underlying our democratic community and constitutional order” in the United States (Butts 1988, 184). It also incorporates, however, recognition that Americans are residents of a planet that has become a global village. This development requires our civic attention and action on a transnational and transcultural scale (Boulding 1988).

Why Do Americans Need Civic Education for Global Understanding? Plainly, American civic involvement needs restoration. Stuart Langton (1990, 305) has observed that post-modern life in the United States has created a number of “alienating conditions” which have become “barriers to healthy civic life today.” These barriers, according to Langton, include an unending and rapid cascade of change, especially in the amount of information available and the speed with which it is handled; an enormous range of complex problems at local, national, and international levels; and confusion about “the amount of disinformation in advertising and public debate.” Such factors contribute to an “apathy and consumerism” which numb Americans and induce in them a sense of helplessness “in the face of forces beyond their control.”

This alienation has, according to Suzanne Morse (1989, 1), contributed to a continuing decline in the number of citizens who vote in public elections. Further, there has been troubling unfamiliarity of voters on key issues and problems when they do go to the polls. Serious societal dislocation such as crime, homelessness, and violence haunts America. These conditions call for renewed civic education about the structures and functions of American government and about a sense of community in America.

But beyond these very real demands for citizenship education devoted to the internal civic requirements of the nation, there exists, too, a need for a broader understanding that will equip young Americans to live effectively in the complex and interrelated world to which their country is inextricably connected. A host of transnational problems, including the disposal and regulation of nuclear weapons, the world-wide difficulties of environmental pollution, shortages of natural resources, and a rapidly emerging interdependent world economy, has in one way or another transformed the lives of

almost all Americans. Our students need familiarity with what Elise Boulding (1988) has called a “global civic culture.” That familiarity would help Americans recognize their obligations to their own nation and to the planet at large.

What Are the Components of Civic Education for Global Understanding? The first component involves educating young Americans about their nation’s history and government, with emphasis upon the core concepts of democracy in the United States. The core concepts reflect content from four systems—political, legal, economic, and social—which when conjoined form the substance of democratic citizenship (Jarolimek 1990). This first component acknowledges American citizenship in a nation-state, which has its own history, traditions, culture, national identity, and national interests.

The second component sharpens student awareness that the responsibilities of citizenship extend far beyond national boundaries and recognizes that irreversible global changes are challenging long-standing conceptions of American civic education. It enhances a growing sense of a civic responsibility to the planet at large. This second component of civic education for global understanding involves “development of competent and responsible citizens whose perspective, knowledge, and skills will enable them to participate more effectively in local, state, national, and international affairs” (Branson 1989, 1).

What Are the Goals of Civic Education for Global Understanding? Included in the first set of goals is a revived civic interest and increased participation in community and national affairs by citizens; an improved civic literacy which flows from a sound understanding of the fundamental structure and operation of the American governmental system (including the United States Constitution); and an ability to make reasoned, reflective decisions about public policy issues. A renewed appreciation of America’s history and cultures is also included among these goals, as is a heightened respect for an understanding of the bedrock of the American political experience. Achievement of these goals will help insure that Americans maintain and improve the democratic framework which has sustained the United States since its founding more than two centuries ago.

The second set of goals encompasses an enhanced recognition by Americans that their obligations of citizenship extend beyond the nation’s frontiers; that all people have a common identity as members of the human species; and that the plethora of conditions once categorized as national problems are now, or very soon will be, transnational problems that require a

Charles Titus is a member of the History Department, Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, Illinois, where he directs the department’s teacher education program and is Chair, Social Science Studies.

commitment to a "global civic culture" if they are to be solved (Boulding 1988). Also included among this second group of goals is a better understanding of this nation's changing international role in a post-Cold War world and knowledge of the expanding network of international connections which continues to tie nations ever more closely to each other. Meeting this set of goals will contribute to an enlightened recognition among Americans of the full range of this country's global connections and involvement.

How Is Citizenship Education for Global Understanding To Be Implemented? Implementation of a meaningful and effective civic education for global understanding requires changes from the way much civic education has traditionally been carried out. One change involves how we teach. As William T. Callahan (1990, 338) has commented, "[G]ood citizens are made not born. The repertoire of intellectual and interpersonal skills needed for effective civic participation must be learned, and to be learned well they must be practiced." The skills, which include the ability to help shape public judgment, are created by meeting, talking, and thinking with other members of the student's community inside and outside of the school.

Benjamin Barber (1992, 245-261) has outlined a model program of civic education at Rutgers University which teaches citizenship through a combination of schooling and community service. A similar program, with some modification, could be applied to secondary schools as well. Such efforts can help us renew our commitment to the national community through service to the local community.

Elise Boulding has described how much progress toward what she has called "a global civic culture" can be made through our individual participation in one or more "INGOs"—international non-governmental organizations, such as sister-city programs, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, sports associations, and other groups. Such participation can help to shatter our narrow, national encapsulation and expand our global understanding.

Implementation of civic education for global understanding calls for changes in the traditional approach to social studies subject matter as well. A revitalized history curriculum, which focuses on global connections in United States history (and there are many of these) can illuminate both our own past and our nation's continuing place in the world.

The study of geography is of paramount importance for it reveals where the resources of the world—human and non-human—are located and how they are related. It focuses on those geo-political factors which plainly will help shape our own history and the history of others; and it expands our knowledge of cultures beyond our own national boundary lines (Jarolimek 1990).

Economics too assumes a significant role in this new approach to civic education. Improved understanding of economics, particularly in terms of international trade and how such trade has been shaped by the development of manufacturing processes and wage and labor considerations in many countries, is of cardinal importance (Jarolimek 1990).

Achieving a new civic education for global understanding will be difficult. Many factors mitigate against it. These include the

inertia induced by what has been called the "deep structure of American schools" (Tye 1992, 10) and resistance by some who, alarmed by the term "global," may see such efforts as a threat to national unity. Yet the future of American democracy depends in large part on how well the citizens of our nation gain the competence of citizenship needed to carry out their civic responsibilities, both here at home and in the world.

References and ERIC Resources

The following list of resources includes references used to prepare this Digest. The items followed by an ED number are available in microfiche and/or paper copies from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). For information about prices, contact EDRS, 7420 Fullerton Road, Suite 110, Springfield, Virginia 22153-2842; telephone numbers are (703) 440-1440 and (800) 443-3742. Entries followed by an EJ number, annotated monthly in CURRENT INDEX TO JOURNALS IN EDUCATION (CJIE), are not available through EDRS. However, they can be located in the journal section of most larger libraries by using the bibliographic information provided, requested through Interlibrary Loan, or ordered from the UMI reprint service.

Barber, Benjamin R. *AN ARISTOCRACY OF EVERYONE: THE POLITICS OF EDUCATION AND THE FUTURE OF AMERICA*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1992.

Boulding, Elise. *BUILDING A GLOBAL CIVIC CULTURE: EDUCATION FOR AN INTERDEPENDENT WORLD*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1988.

Branson, Margaret S. *INTERNATIONAL AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION: NEED AND NEXUS*. Paper presented at the International Conference on Constitutional Government and the Development of an Enlightened Citizenry, Los Angeles, CA, September, 1989. ED 314 302.

Butts, R. Freeman. *THE MORALITY OF DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP: GOALS FOR CIVIC EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC'S THIRD CENTURY*. Calabasas, CA: Center for Civic Education, 1988. ED 341 593.

Callahan, William T., Jr. "Conference Recommendations." In *CITIZENSHIP FOR THE 21ST CENTURY*, edited by William T. Callahan, Jr., and Ronald A. Banaszak. Bloomington, IN: ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education, 1990. ED 329 450.

Jarolimek, John. "The Knowledge Base of Democratic Citizens." *THE SOCIAL STUDIES* 81 (September/October, 1990): 21-23. EJ 419 172.

Langton, Stuart. "Citizenship Participation and Citizenship Education in the 21st Century." In *CITIZENSHIP FOR THE 21ST CENTURY*, edited by William T. Callahan, Jr., and Ronald A. Banaszak. Bloomington, IN: ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education, 1990. ED 329 450.

Morse, Suzanne. *RENEWING CIVIC CAPACITY: PREPARING COLLEGE STUDENTS FOR SERVICE AND CITIZENSHIP*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 8. Washington, DC: School of Education and Human Development, The George Washington University, 1989. ED 321 704.

Tye, Kenneth. "Restructuring Schools: Beyond the Rhetoric." *PHI DELTA KAPPAN* 74 (September 1992): 9-14. EJ 449 869.

This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract RR93002014. The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or ED.

This ERIC Digest is one of a series on topics in social studies/social science education. For \$5.00, an annual subscription to receive each Digest may be ordered. Call our toll free telephone number, (800) 266-3815.